

What Side are You On? Are You Sure?

Elementary Level

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Goal: 1) Students will be able to conduct an interview and write a reflection essay.

2) Students will understand and be able to differentiate between multiple perspectives on a controversial issue.

Rationale: Students live in an increasingly complex world where they need to understand multiple perspectives on a public issue and how it will affect their daily lives. By interviewing an elected official or community member, students will gain skills in interviewing and recording the answers they receive. This unit would be subsequently taught after an elected official visits the classroom to discuss his/her role in the governmental process.

Evidence of Learning: Students will complete a time log, interview questions and answers, and an end-of-project reflection essay.

Grade Level Expectations:

Civics: 1.1.2 Evaluates how a public issue is related to constitutional rights and the common good.

Writing: 2.3.1 Writes in a variety of forms/genres

Timeline:

1. Teacher model "What is a controversial issue?" and "How do I conduct an interview?"
2. Students practice selecting controversial issues (may need additional help from teacher selecting and focusing controversial issue topics)
3. Students research topic.
4. Students select final issue and report their issue in written form.
5. Students write a journal response about their initial opinion of the issue.
6. Students formulate interview questions.
7. Students select relevant person(s) to interview and contact them.
8. Students practice interviewing skills and recording skills with each other.
9. Students conduct official interviews.
10. Students write summary of interview (may need additional help and modeling from the teacher)
11. Students meet with teacher to finalize their reflection essay.
12. Students present reports (optional).
13. Debrief project (Exit slip, evaluation form, etc)

Assessment:

There are multiple opportunities to embed assessments at every step of this process. One very effective technique teachers can use on a daily basis is the “exit slip” assessment, which gives teachers a quick snapshot of daily progress of individual students towards the end goal of the project. For example, planning an exit slip after the first period of teaching to find out how many students understand what a controversial topic is, and how to select them would let the teacher use formative assessment to check for student’s understanding, and decide if more teaching on the topic needs to be done, or students are ready to move on to more learning. Students then are accountable on an individual basis for the learning, and the teacher has a written record of individual participation in the assignments. Also, there are the formal assessments of the interview questions, note taking, summarizing of notes and the written essay. The debrief session allows students to examine their own learning to assess what they really enjoyed about the project, and what they found difficult, or even boring! ☺ It gives students the chance to assess what they learned, and gives the teacher very valuable feedback to improve the project for the next set of students.